

GEHLEN (SITUATIONER) ER--41

BY GEOFFREY ISSOTT

BONN, WEST GERMANY (REUTERS)--REINHARD GEHLEN, KNOWN AS THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE, WILL RETIRE IN APRIL FROM HIS POST AS HEAD OF THE WEST GERMAN COUNTER-ESPIONAGE ORGANIZATION, WHICH HE HAS LEAD SINCE SHORTLY AFTER WORLD WAR II.

MOST PEOPLE KNOW LITTLE OF HIM OTHER THAN HIS NAME AND AGE. FOR GEHLEN HAS RULED HIS NETWORK OF CLOAK-AND-DAGGER MEN FROM BEHIND A VEIL OF ANONYMITY AT HIS HEADQUARTERS SURROUNDED BY BARBED WIRE NEAR MUNICH. AS FAR AS IS KNOWN, NO PHOTOGRAPH HAS BEEN TAKEN OF HIM IN THE PAST 23 YEARS.

THE LAST ONE, TAKEN IN 1944, SHOWS HIM AS A BALDING SLIGHTLY-BUILT 40-YEAR-OLD IN THE UNIFORM OF A WEHRMACHT COLONEL.

SOME 19 YEARS LATER, THE EAST GERMAN SECURITY SERVICE PUT A BIG PRICE ON THIS BALDING HEAD--A TESTIMONIAL TO THE EFFECTIVENESS WITH WHICH HIS POST-WAR APPARATUS WAS ALREADY WORKING.

BORN AT ERFURT (NOW IN EAST GERMANY) APRIL 3, 1902, THE SON OF A PUBLISHING HOUSE DIRECTOR, GEHLEN JOINED THE ARMY IN 1920. BY 1935 HE WAS AN OFFICER ON THE GENERAL STAFF, AFTER RECEIVING TRAINING IN SECRET-SERVICE WORK IN THE FIRST YEARS OF NAZI POWER.

(MORE) RP 10:12P

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ADD BONN GEHLEN (SITUATIONER) X X X POWER.

PROMOTED TO COLONEL IN 1942, HE TOOK OVER THE DEPARTMENT CALLED FOREIGN ARMIES EAST IN THE ARMY GENERAL STAFF, WHERE HIS DUTIES WERE TO COLLECT AND ANALYZE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENEMY ON AND BEHIND THE EASTERN FRONT.

WHEN ADMIRAL WILHELM CANARIS, HEAD OF THE GERMAN COUNTER-ESPIONAGE SERVICE, FELL INTO DISFAVOR IN THE SAME YEAR, GEHLEN SET UP HIS OWN COUNTER-ESPIONAGE NETWORK.

GEHLEN, WHO MANAGED TO SAVE HIS MASSIVE SECRET SERVICE FILES IN THE CHAOS OF THE FINAL WEEKS OF WAR, QUICKLY AWAKENED THE INTEREST OF THE AMERICANS WHEN HE WAS CAPTURED IN BAVARIA.

AFTER CAREFUL INTERROGATION IN WASHINGTON, HE WAS SENT BACK TO GERMANY AND GIVEN HIS OWN DEPARTMENT TO ANALYZE INFORMATION FROM EASTERN EUROPE.

HIS WORK THERE PROVED INVALUABLE TO THE AMERICANS AND HE WAS GIVEN A FREE HAND TO EXPAND HIS NETWORK FROM A BASE NEAR MUNICH.

AFTER THAT, THE VEIL OF SECRECY FELL OVER HIS ACTIVITIES AGAIN.

IN 1956, HIS ORGANIZATION WAS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED AND CALLED THE FEDERAL INFORMATION SERVICE, DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THE CHANCELLOR.

(MORE) RP 10:15P

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SECOND ADD BONN GEHLEN (SITUATIONER) X X X CHANCELLOR.

SINCE THEN, GEHLEN'S ORGANIZATION HAS RECEIVED AN ESTIMATED SUM OF MORE THAN 100,000,000 MARKS (NEARLY \$28,000,000) A YEAR FROM THE FEDERAL BUDGET.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK FOR THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE IS A CAREFULLY KEPT SECRET. REPORTS SEVERAL YEARS AGO PUT IT AT 4,000 INCLUDING 500 OFFICERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

GEHLEN WAS DUE TO RETIRE LAST APRIL 3, WHEN HE WAS 65, BUT HIS TENURE OF OFFICE WAS EXTENDED FOR A YEAR BY THE BONN GOVERNMENT UNTIL A SUCCESSOR WAS FOUND.

STRONGLY TIPPED IN THE SUMMER OF 1967 FOR THE ROLE WAS 53-YEAR-OLD LT. GEN. GERHARD WESSEL, WHO WORKED FOR GEHLEN DURING WORLD WAR II.

HE WAS AT THAT TIME WEST GERMANY'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION'S MILITARY COMMITTEE IN WASHINGTON.